



*You came near when I called on you; you said, 'Do not fear!' You have taken up my cause, O Lord, you have redeemed my life.
– Lamentations 3:57-58*

Our sermon series, Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption, explores the subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle ways we can undermine our faith, damage our relationships with others and distance ourselves from God.

Together, we'll learn how to recognize these struggles, bring them into the light and ground ourselves in God's promises, truth and vision for who we are becoming.

We hope you'll join us and take this journey of renewal together. Prayers of blessing as we move from Ruin to Redemption.

Scan the QR code for online devotional access. New content from Pastor Jon is published every Wednesday during Lent.



Week Six

Wednesday, March 25 – Tuesday, March 31

What to expect this week:

This is a straight-forward week. Use the “Free Days” to catch up on past readings, or to simply reflect where God’s Spirit has been leading you.

Suggested Week Six Schedule:

Wednesday, March 25

- Attend worship at 6:15 p.m.
- Read Devotional: Expect Others to Fix You – Wait for Someone Else to Solve Your Problems or Validate You

Thursday, March 26

- Read Devotional: Play the Victim – Always Find Someone or Something to Blame Instead of Taking Ownership

Friday, March 27 – Free Day

Saturday, March 28 – Free Day

Sunday, March 29

- Attend Palm Sunday worship at 9:30 a.m. or 10:45 a.m.
- Read Devotional: Go Through the Motions – Perform Religion Without Heart Connection

Monday, March 30

- Read Devotional: Be Self-Absorbed – Dismiss others and – Puff Up Yourself

Tuesday, March 31 – Free Day

Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption Wednesday, March 25

Expect Others to Fix You

– Wait for Someone Else to Solve Your Problems or Validate You

Before we begin, please note that God has blessed us with wise counselors and medical professionals who are able to walk with us in times of discernment or when we need to process trauma or pain. Seeking the help of trained professionals to provide the tools needed to navigate this season of life is not only wise, but also holy.

Psalm 62:5-7 - 5 For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him. 6 He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. 7 On God rests my deliverance and my honor; my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.

FROM RUIN...

If you're looking to stay stuck, delay healing, and strain your relationships, start here: **Expect Others to Fix You – Wait for Someone Else to Solve Your Problems or Validate You.** Look to people to meet needs only God can fill. Let others carry responsibility for your emotional well-being and be disappointed when they inevitably fall short. Wait for others to call, check in, and encourage you and when they don't, assume you're forgotten or unlovable. Believe healing comes from the outside in, waiting for your circumstances to change or for someone else to change, before you start healing. When life gets hard, blame instead of grow, shift the focus outward; as long as it's someone else's fault, you don't have to change. Relying on others for what only God can provide traps you in passivity and isolation, blocking true healing.

...TO REDEMPTION

What does scripture have to say?

Scripture reminds us that healing begins by returning to the One who restores. Let's begin by reflecting on the call found in **Lamentations**

3:40-41 - 40 Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the Lord. 41 Let us lift up our hearts as well as our hands to God in heaven.

This is the starting point: self-examination and returning. God calls us to lift our hearts, not just our hands, our inner life and not just our outward actions. Expecting others to fix us often keeps us from doing the hard but holy work of self-examination and turning back to God.

- What are you expecting someone else to fix or heal that God might be inviting you to examine and bring to Him personally?
- What would it look like to lift up your heart and hands in surrender?

Human beings, no matter how wise, kind or strong are limited. While we often look to people for answers or rescue, **Psalm 121:1-2** reminds us that our help comes from the Creator Himself. **1 I lift up my eyes to the hills—from where will my help come? 2 My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.**

- Where have you been lifting your eyes (to people, solutions, or circumstances) before lifting them to the Lord and what would it look like to redirect your dependence back to Him first?
- Which part of your life needs the reminder: **“My help comes from the Lord”**?

Jesus is the rest-giver and invites you personally to bring your burdens to Him. Let Jesus' invitation in **Matthew 11:28-29** sink in **28 ‘Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.**

- Where have you expected someone else to carry a burden or repair a wound that only God can heal?
- What heavy weight are you expecting someone else to carry for you and how might coming directly to Christ bring the rest you've been seeking?

Deep-rooted trust in God stabilizes the soul in ways no human ever can. **Jeremiah 17:7-8 - 7 Blessed are those who trust in the Lord,**

whose trust is the Lord. 8 They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit.

- What anxieties have grown because your trust has shifted from God to others?
- Where might God be inviting you to sink your roots deeper into Him?
- What fruit might begin to grow again as your trust is realigned?

James 4:8a reminds us that our healing journey begins with our stepping toward God, not waiting for someone else to lead us there. 8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Philippians 2:12b invites us to 12b work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

- What does drawing near to God look like for you in this season?
- Where are you expecting others to “work out” your spiritual life for you or relied on someone else’s spirituality rather than cultivating your own?
- Where might you need to take ownership of your spiritual growth and how does it encourage you to know that God Himself is working in you?

People can support you, but Christ empowers you. Philippians 4:13 is a short yet powerful verse that talks about the strength of God 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

- Where do you need Jesus’ strength instead of human strength?
- What feels impossible right now that becomes possible when Christ strengthens you?

In 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 Paul shares his own personal struggles and God’s response, 9 but he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.’ So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

10 Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

Your weakness is not something for others to fix, it is a place for God’s grace to shine.

- Where have you been ashamed of weakness instead of offering it to Christ and glorifying Him through it?

And finally Proverbs 4:23 reminds us that guarding our hearts is our responsibility 23 Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

No one can guard your heart for you. Let others support you but let God be the One who heals, restores and transforms you.

- How might God be calling you to take ownership of what flows from your heart?

Note to self - Which of the statements below speak to you? Why?

- Your healing is not someone else’s responsibility.
- God invites you to participate in healing, not just wait.
- Let other people determine how you feel. If they affirm you, you're happy. If they disappoint you, you're crushed. This keeps you on an emotional rollercoaster, with no seatbelt.
- Growth begins with ownership. Blame is a comfortable trap that blocks transformation.
- Keeping your eyes fixed on the past keeps you from moving forward in faith.
- Pain is like soil; you can’t grow anything if you refuse to dig.

Here’s the Truth:

People can support, encourage and walk alongside you but only God can truly heal and restore your heart. Relationships are a gift, not a foundation. Your ultimate hope and renewal come from Christ alone. You don’t need someone to save you; you already have a Savior. Let others walk with you but let God lead you.

Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption Thursday March 26

Play the Victim – Always Find Someone or Something to Blame Instead of Taking Ownership.

Read Psalm 51:3-4 - 3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. 4 Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgement.

FROM RUIN...

If you want to sabotage your growth, damage your relationships and trap yourself in bitterness, start here: **Play the Victim – Always Find Someone or Something to Blame Instead of Taking Ownership.** Blame others constantly. Refuse to take responsibility, make other people or circumstances the root cause of every difficulty you face. Refuse to look inward or consider your own role. Deflect responsibility by using your past hurt as a shield against accountability and let pain become a license for selfishness, negativity, or destructive behavior. Let your story of suffering define your identity. Focus on your wounds, limitations and injustices instead of seeking healing, growth or new opportunities.

Act like you don't need advice or support because "no one understands" or "no one can help." Shut down feedback, prayer or wise counsel that challenges your victim mindset and let your story be a barrier, not a bridge. Refuse to own your part of the problem. Always have someone else to blame; your parents, your boss, your ex, your church, even God. Use the past as a permanent reason you can't move forward.

...TO REDEMPTION

What does scripture have to say?

Playing the victim is often a way to avoid taking responsibility for our choices, actions or words. Scripture calls us to honesty, personal accountability and confession before God. Take a moment to read Genesis 3:10-13 - 10 He said, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.' 11 He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' 12 The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.' 13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent tricked me, and I ate.'

- Rather than taking responsibility, where did Adam point?
- Where did Eve point?
- How might blaming others keep you from growth, healing, or restoration?

In contrast, read Psalm 51:3-4 - 3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. 4 Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgement.

1 John 1:8-10 speaks a powerful word regarding the presence of sin in our lives. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

- When confessing his sin to God, where did David place the responsibility?
- What does this teach you about confession and the ownership of your part and how does it lead to spiritual freedom and growth?

- Where in your life might you be avoiding responsibility, and how can confession restore your relationship with God and others?

Avoiding personal responsibility and keeps us stuck. Yet God calls us to honest self-examination and confession. Ownership of our choices leads to healing, forgiveness, restoration and spiritual growth.

Let Lamentations 3:40 sink in for a moment, 40 Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the Lord.

Note to self - Which of the statements below speak to you? Why?

- Playing the victim keeps eyes fixed on the past instead of moving forward in faith.
- Blaming others is like being stuck in wet cement; the longer you stay, the harder it is to move.
- You can't truly fly when you're still holding onto the cage.
- Pointing fingers might shift the focus, but it never solves the problem.
- Analyze what everyone else is doing wrong. Just don't change anything about yourself.
- Freedom isn't found in denial or blame; it's found in surrender, responsibility, and grace.

Here's the Truth:

Blame keeps you stuck. It may feel safe as it protects you from risk and responsibility, but it also keeps you trapped behind invisible walls. Healing and transformation happen when you stop rehearsing a skewed narrative, take responsibility of your own story and move forward in faith. While your history may explain some things, it doesn't excuse you from becoming who God has called you to be. The moment you stop pointing fingers, transformation begins.

Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption Sunday, March 29 – Palm Sunday

**Go Through the Motions
– Perform Religion Without Heart Connection.**

Isaiah 29:15 - 15 Ha! You who hide a plan too deep for the Lord, whose deeds are in the dark, and who say, ‘Who sees us? Who knows us?’

FROM RUIN...

If you want to look spiritual while slowly dying inside, start here: **Go Through the Motions – Perform Religion Without Heart Connection.** Do all the right things for all the wrong reasons. Show up, sing the songs, say the right words, serve when needed, smile when appropriate, check all the boxes, but never check your heart.

Let habits replace intimacy. Read the Bible, pray or attend church out of obligation. Don’t allow God to change, stretch or convict you. Keep things safe and predictable. Mistake activity for intimacy, stay busy doing things for God, while ignoring time with God.

Never examine your motives. Don’t wrestle with questions, doubts or convictions but simply stay on autopilot. Serve, give or lead to impress people rather than God and let public approval become more important than private obedience. Over time, you’ll have a faith that looks alive on the outside but is hollow on the inside.

...TO REDEMPTION

What does scripture have to say?

Spiritual routines without heart-level engagement can leave faith dull, mechanical and disconnected. Scripture repeatedly calls us to authentic devotion, inner transformation and abiding in Christ.

Let’s begin by reflecting on the heart-level warning God gives in Isaiah 29:13–14 - 13 The Lord said: Because these people draw near with their mouths and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their worship of me is a human commandment learned by rote; 14 so I will again do amazing things with this people, shocking and amazing. The wisdom of their wise shall perish, and the discernment of the discerning shall be hidden.

- Where in your life do you notice yourself “drawing near with your lips” but not with your heart?
- Are there areas of faith, worship or service where you are simply doing what you’ve always done without real connection, desire or attention to God?
- What would it look like to invite God back into that space?

The reality is that faith is for God, not for show. Take a moment to read and consider Jesus’ warning in **Matthew 6:1 - 6** ‘Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

- What is Jesus asking us to pay attention to here?
- Are there ways your faith practices, prayer, giving, serving or worship can subtly shift from genuine devotion to performance?
- Take a moment to ask: Who am I doing this for - God or an audience?
- How does my heart respond to Jesus’ call toward unseen faithfulness?

In **2 Corinthians 13:5** Paul calls us to honest self-examination. **5 Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless, indeed, you fail to pass the test!**”

What might it look like for you to pause and ask:

- Am I truly living in the faith or just acting out the routines of Christianity?
- In what ways has my awareness of Christ’s presence within me grown dim?
- What would help your heart become awake to Him again?

2 Timothy 3:5 is a sobering reminder that it’s impossible to maintain the appearance of spiritual life while missing its power. **3 You must understand this, that in the last days distressing times will come. 2 For people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, brutes, haters of good, 4 treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 holding to the outward form of godliness but denying its power. Avoid them!**”

- Where do you see the outward form of godliness in your life (activities, words, habits) but without transformation, dependence or Spirit-empowered change?
- What would it look like to trade routine for renewal?

God promises that the cure for going through the motions is wholehearted seeking. **Jeremiah 29:13** shares this insight, **13 When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart,**

Wholehearted seeking is the cure for spiritual half-heartedness.

- Where is God inviting you to seek Him *with your whole heart* today?

- What would it require to turn from half-heartedness to wholehearted pursuit?

This is where everything returns: Going through the motions happens when we stop abiding and fruitfulness flows only from connection. In **John 15:5** Jesus shares this analogy **5 I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.**

- What does Jesus’ reminder “apart from me you can do nothing” stir in you today?
- Where do you need to slow down and return to the Vine and that connection to Jesus?

Note to self - Which of the statements below speak to you? Why?

- You can be busy in ministry but still miss the Messiah.
- When your audience becomes people instead of God, your reward will be temporary and empty.
- Spiritual numbness is like a foot that’s fallen asleep; it’s still attached but you’re not going anywhere.
- A lamp with no oil is beautiful, but dark.
- Going through the motions might impress people but only intimacy with Jesus transforms you.
- Planes have autopilot, not faith.

Here’s the Truth:

Going through the motions may impress people, but only intimacy with Jesus transforms the soul. God doesn’t call you to perform, He calls you to abide. True life, joy and transformation come when you stop pretending and pursue Him with your whole heart. Without reflection, religious activity can lead to spiritual numbness. God wants your heart, not just your habits. When your audience becomes people instead of God, your reward will be temporary and empty.

Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption Monday, March 30

Be Self Absorbed - Dismiss others and - Puff Up Yourself

Proverbs 16:18 - 18 Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

FROM RUIN...

If you're looking for a guaranteed way to wreck your relationships, sabotage your growth and distance yourself from God, start here: **Be Self Absorbed**. Constantly compare yourself to others and make everything about you. Make your needs, your pain, your dreams the center of every conversation. If others are hurting, talk about how it affects you. Boost your ego by constantly comparing yourself to those around you. Feel superior when they fail. Feel threatened when they succeed. Celebrate your successes loudly. Blame others for your failures. Avoid apologies. Get defensive and view feedback as criticism and correction as an attack. Take advantage of others. Take the credit that others or God deserves.

...TO REDEMPTION

What does scripture have to say?

The world often encourages self-reliance, personal glory and asserting our own importance. Scripture, however, calls us to a very different way of living, a life marked by humility. **1 Peter 5:6** invite us to release control for recognition and trust God to exalt you in His way **6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time.**

James 4:6-10 warns us that pride puts us at odds with God as it creates an unteachable and resistant spirit in us. **6 But he gives all the more**

grace; therefore it says, **'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'** **7** Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. **8** Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. **9** Lament and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy into dejection. **10** Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

- How does pride create resistance to God's guidance in your life?
- In what ways can embracing humility draw you closer to God and open you to His grace?

Pride often inflates our self-importance and blinds us to our weakness. Paul reminds us that maturity involves honest self-examination, not measuring ourselves by others. How does **Galatians 6:3-5** challenge this tendency to compare ourselves to others? **3 For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. 4 All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbour's work, will become a cause for pride.**

- How does comparing yourself to others inflate pride or distort your perspective?
- How can honest self-examination cultivate humility and accountability in your life?

Proverbs 16:18 shares a simple and powerful reminder that **18 Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.**

- Take a moment to pause for a spiritual check-in, where has pride been slowly creeping up?
- Where have you had the tendency to puff yourself up at the cost of others?

Read **Philippians 2:3-8** also reminds us of the heart in which we are to live and work, **3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. 5 Let the**

same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, 7 but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, 8 he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.

- How does Jesus' humility reshape the way you view your own status and achievement?
- What would it look like to take on this mindset in your relationships or work today?

King Nebuchadnezzar boasted in his own greatness, believing his kingdom existed by his power and for his glory. Pride blinded him; humility restored him. Take a moment to read **Daniel 4:28-34 - 28 All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. 29 At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, 30 and the king said, 'Is this not magnificent Babylon, which I have built as a royal capital by my mighty power and for my glorious majesty?' 31 While the words were still in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven: 'O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: The kingdom has departed from you! 32 You shall be driven away from human society, and your dwelling shall be with the animals of the field. You shall be made to eat grass like oxen, and seven times shall pass over you, until you have learned that the Most High has sovereignty over the kingdom of mortals and gives it to whom he will.'** 33 Immediately the sentence was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven away from human society, ate grass like oxen, and his body was bathed with the dew of heaven, until his hair grew as long as eagles' feathers and his nails became like birds' claws. 34 When that period was over, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me. I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored the one who lives for ever. For his sovereignty is an everlasting sovereignty, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation.

- What do you learn about pride from Nebuchadnezzar's experience?
- What is the cost of pride?

- How does his transformation speak to areas where pride may be distorting your own perspective?

Pride leads to resistance, self-deception and spiritual blindness. Scripture calls us to humility, trust and dependence on God, allowing His grace to guide, correct and exalt us in His timing. Identify one area of life where pride may be shaping your decisions or attitudes. Ask God to give you humility and discernment, following Christ's example in small, tangible ways today.

Note to self - Which of the statements below speak to you? Why?

- A puffed-up chest will eventually be forced to exhale.
- True humility doesn't mean thinking less of yourself; it means thinking of yourself less.
- Pride loves to look down and sideways towards others. Humility keeps its eyes upward towards Christ.
- When you live like everything good in your life is your doing, you stop giving God the glory He deserves.
- Pride thrives in self-centeredness.
- The path of humility is not weakness; it is the path where God Himself lifts us up.

Here's the Truth:

God actively resists the proud, and pride is far more than a personality flaw, it's a spiritual danger that leads to downfall. Pride fueled the fall of angels, the failure of disciples and it continues to blind us, isolate us from wisdom and set us up for failure. Pride often hides in perfectionism or comparison, inflating self or fueling insecurity.

The good news is that humility invites God's help: when we lower ourselves, acknowledge our dependence on Him, and rely on His grace rather than our own efforts, He lifts us up. Pride says, "I earned this," while humility says, "God gave me grace."